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**EDUCATIONAL WORK WITH GIFTED CHILDREN  
IN PRIMARY SCHOOL IN CHINA (on the example  
of communicatively gifted children)**

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**НАВЧАЛЬНА РОБОТА З ОБДАРОВАНИМИ ДІТЬМИ В ПОЧАТКОВІЙ  
ШКОЛІ В КНР (на прикладі комунікативно обдарованих дітей)**

**Пен Чен**

Chinese pedagogical science always had a rather complex relationship with the concept of “giftedness” as a social and educational reality as a sign of a person’s giftedness in traditional Chinese pedagogy was considered as the person’s social success (good position, social and professional demand, maximum compliance with the social ideal of society). Online education is always considered a supporting form of education service in China or a variant of education service providing for special categories of children (hard-to-reach children, children with special physical and educational needs, those who are in difficult life situations: imprisoned, in hospital, etc). However, the 2020 pandemic situation faced the whole world and China in particular with the need to reconsider views over the place of distance education. All pedagogical and educational work in the world has moved online and worked with gifted children is no exception. The article presents the Chinese experience of online work with gifted children (especially the communicatively gifted ones) using special education platforms and programs. To write the article, a complex of theoretical and empirical research methods were used (abstraction method, analysis of pedagogical literature, induction and deduction, observation, etc.).

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*Keywords:* gifted children; distance education; primary education; creative education; education platform; communicatively gifted children; socially gifted.

Китайська педагогічна наука завжди мала досить складні стосунки з поняттям «обдарованість» як соціальною та освітньою реальністю, оскільки ознакою обдарованості людини у традиційній китайській педагогіці вважався соціальний успіх людини (об’єктивне матеріальне становище, соціальний та професійний попит, максимальна відповідність соціальному ідеалу суспільства). Онлайн-освіта завжди вважається допоміжною формою освіти в Китаї або варіантом освітньої послуги, діяльність якої спрямована на особливі категорії дітей (важкодоступні діти, діти з особливими фізичними та освітніми потребами, ті, хто опинився у складній життєвій ситуації:

ув'язнені, у лікарні тощо). Однак ситуація з пандемією 2020 року поставила увесь світ та Китай, зокрема, перед необхідністю переглянути погляди щодо місця дистанційної освіти. Вся педагогічна та освітня робота у світі була переміщена в Інтернет і робота з обдарованими дітьми не стала винятком. Стаття має на меті представити китайський досвід роботи з обдарованими дітьми (особливо з комунікативно обдарованими) в Інтернеті за допомогою спеціальних освітніх платформ та програм. Для написання статті було використано комплекс теоретичних і емпіричних методів дослідження (метод абстракції, аналіз педагогічної літератури, індукція та дедукція, спостереження тощо).

Дослідження проводиться в рамках програми «Порівняльне дослідження професійного розвитку вчителів початкових класів у Китаї та Південній Кореї» (реєстраційний номер ZKNUC2017038)

*Ключові слова:* обдаровані діти; дистанційна освіта; початкова освіта; творча освіта; освітня платформа; комунікативно обдаровані діти; соціально обдаровані.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Revealing, development and support of gifted children, ensuring their personal, social self-realization and professional self-determination is a modern social order, which determines “the preservation of the country’s national gene pool, the formation of the future highly professional elite in various fields of intellectual and creative activity” (Clark, 2008). The issue of children’s giftedness, educational work with them, development of their abilities refers, on the one hand, to the rather studied ones, on the other hand, it is a subject of ongoing disputes in the pedagogical environment. By the beginning of the XXI century the problem of identifying and developing gifted children, realizing their potential has not lost its relevance, but scientific views on what constitutes children’s giftedness, what are its types, methods of identification, pedagogical methods of development, have changed in many ways. New types of giftedness were identified (empathic, leadership, social, communicative, etc.).

The giftedness of children became the subject of the Chinese pedagogical sciences’ attention only in the second half of the 20th century. It was created the system for the selection of children gifted in various fields of activity (science, music, sports, technology) with their further relocation to specialized educational institutions (mainly of the boarding type) for the maximum development of their abilities. Communicatively gifted children present a special category of gifted children as the process of working with such children goes systematically in the process of obtaining general education and do not imply the exclusion of communicatively gifted children from the primary children’s collective for subsequent transfer to specialized boarding schools or classes. The Chinese education system is interested in the early identification and development of such

children since it is them who are subsequently considered as the personnel reserve of the Party and social movements in the country. Computer technologies today are an integral part of the education systems around the world. Thanks to the good financial support from the state, China today can be considered the flagship in the use of computer programs and the Internet in the educational process. However, the majority of modern computer products, cracking for the development of a certain type of giftedness, bypass the work in the field of communicative giftedness.

In the research, we used a complex of pedagogical methods traditional for research of such kind: analysis of pedagogical literature, media materials, documentation on issues of both distance educational work with children in general and the practice of working with communicatively gifted children in particular in the PR China and abroad; praximic methods (process analyze of practical activities in this area of education; method of independent characteristics); analysis and synthesis of existing approaches and theoretical ideas; induction and deduction; classification; analogy; comparison; hypothesis making; forecasting. Among the empirical methods that were used while making the research, there can be named observation, pedagogical consulting, studying, generalization, and dissemination of typical and advanced pedagogical experience of the PRC in the field of requirements for modern educational IT products.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Since the subject of this article is complex and consists of at least 3 components (the general concept of communicative giftedness, the features of educational work with gifted children in the context of online education, and the features of IT products for gifted children's activities in modern China), the characteristics of modern scientific research will also consist of 3 blocks. We have not found studies that would raise the issue of pedagogical work with communicatively gifted children in the context of online education, in particular in PR China.

Based on the most popular interpretations of the giftedness concept (which came to education from psychology), the modern world and Chinese pedagogy see giftedness as:

- qualitatively unique combination of abilities that ensures the successful performance of the activity (H. Gardner, A. Passow, P. Phenix, S. Reis, J. Renzulli, and others);

- general ability that determines the breadth of a person's capabilities, conditions, and originality of his activities (S. Kaplan, I. Sato, L. Smith, E. Torrance, V. Ward and others);
- mental potential, or intellect; a holistic characteristic of (individual) cognitive and learning abilities (S. Schroth, J. Helfer, J. A. J. Shi, Z. Zha, and others);
- talent, the presence of internal conditions for outstanding achievements and activities (J. Chan, R. Li, J. Spinks, and others);
- a high level of development of any abilities (scientific, artistic, creative, etc.) (K. Heller, F. Monks, R. Sternberg, R. Subotnik, and others);
- dominance of a certain trait of a person's character, which determines his/her personality type, behavior, etc. (empathic giftedness, social giftedness, communicative giftedness, etc.) (V. Vaughan, J. Feldhusen, J. Asher, W. Wu, S. Chou, and others).

Most modern scientific works by both Chinese and foreign researchers devoted to the issues of pedagogical work with gifted children in China and the PR China today are mainly devoted to the issues of gifted children selection and training system's genesis in China with the emphasis on the historical component (K. Latshaw, Z. Bahr, and others); comparison of the Chinese and American, British and Russian systems of work with this category of children (S. Schroth, J. Helfer, D. Beck, L. Kalashnyk, V. Yermakov, and others) and the innovations that the Chinese educational institutions of the informal education use in the practice of working with gifted children (U. Munandar, F. Monks, R. Sternberg, and others).

Such researchers as R. Li, R. Jie, Z. Rao, F. Zhao, L. Lou in their publications raise questions about the use of modern IT technologies in education in PR China, insisting on the point of view that these programs should be a common product of computer and educational specialists, as well as putting forward many requirements for an IT product that can be used for the education sector and what components should be present if a particular program is positioned as the one to be used in work with gifted children

## **RESULTS**

Understanding of talents and giftedness at all times was far from ambiguous. The idea of giftedness is influenced by cultural and historical conditions: social structure, social values, social ideology, social stereotypes, as well as scientific views and concepts in a particular country at a particular time.

Every society defines giftedness according to its needs, therefore its understanding changes depending on time and place as the concept of giftedness changes depending on the changes that have a place in a society and its needs.

Various types of human activity require different types of giftedness, types of personal orientation. According to the types of activity and the spheres of the psyche that provide it, the following types of talent are traditionally distinguished:

- General intellectual (encyclopaedic);
- Academic (mathematical);
- Creative;
- Artistic and aesthetic;
- Communicative;
- Psychomotor;
- Practical;
- Spiritual and value (Piechowski, 2009).

The characteristics and needs of different groups of talented children and youth vary greatly, they need different support programs, a system of events that would be closely related to the main type of talent the child has.

The communicative abilities of a person occupy an important place in the general structure of human abilities. The level of their development determines how successfully the individual can communicate with others. Communication is one of the key factors in the development and socialization of a person; without it, these processes are impossible. Through communication, a person assimilates information, knowledge, experience, norms, etc., and also identifies himself/herself as a person.

As modern studies show (Rogers, 2002), success in life is often achieved not by those who have highly developed intellectual abilities, but by the people who can easily enter into communication, establish favorable interpersonal relationships. The basis of success in a social environment largely depends on communicative abilities and giftedness. Communicative giftedness covers a wide area of social relations at the “person-person” level, presupposes the innate ability of a person to establish contacts, to understand human behavior correctly, to express judgments about people quickly and accurately, to understand and predict the behavior of another person and to build high-quality interpersonal relationships. Communicatively gifted people are characterized by a high level of intelligence, well-developed intuition, understanding of feelings and needs of other people, ability to empathize, a vivid sense of humor that helps them to get in touch with other people and to be liked by them (Smith, 2005). Communicative

giftedness is an integral part of leadership as a personal characteristic of a person, which is the subject of special attention for the system of pedagogical work with a child in China.

There are many prerequisites for the development of communicative giftedness during childhood. At this time, self-awareness, the need for communication with adults and peers, the ability to empathize, empathy are actively formed, social emotions and feelings develop. Communicatively gifted children are always leaders in a children's team. They have early leadership qualities that contribute to the unification of the children's micro collective. They are distinguished by their activity, a seen interest in people, and the need for communication. It is precisely the communicatively gifted children who become the initiators of interaction in any group. A communicatively gifted child often takes on the role of organizer of collective games and other group activities. Possessing good speech skills, he/she can tell the teacher or other grown-ups what other children want, as a lot of children find it difficult to express their thoughts. In other words, communicatively gifted children are not afraid of grown-ups at any age, they see them as interlocutors and communication partners. Such children always show a willingness to help their peers with advice or deed, they can settle emerging conflicts (Bar-On, 2007). Most children want to communicate and be friends with communicatively gifted children.

Communicatively gifted children imagine how any game or activity can be organized, they know how to create conditions for games or activities: they choose a place, assign roles, find the necessary toys and tools, determine the content of the game or activity and always bring something new into it (mainly into the procedure or predicted result). Such children participate with interest in conversations on the topic of the upcoming game or activity, ask adults many questions to learn something new, and are happy to share their impressions with everyone around them. Vivid impressions allow communicatively gifted children to take a more responsible attitude to everything they do. They are inventive in their actions with toys, imitate their voices, and conduct conversations with them, their activities are emotional. More often communicatively gifted children willingly take on the main roles and do well with them. They often show exaggerated demands on their peers, striving for leadership (Smith, 2005; Sternberg, 2015).

The preschool group is the first children's community in which communication and various types of children's activities are formed and developed, a new social role is acquired – a member of a children's group,

relationships with peers are formed. The task of the preschool and school education system in the PRC is to identify and monitor communicatively gifted children. In contrast to many Western countries (Israel, Ukraine, France, etc.) where the term “hyperactive” is often used for communicative (socially) gifted children and it is believed that this aspect requires pedagogical (and sometimes medical) correction, in modern China, even in kindergarten, such children become “assistants” of the educator and the development of their communicative giftedness goes on systematically and naturally. The kindergarten charter stipulates that each teacher must have at least 2 assistants from among the children of the group. It is believed that this stimulates the children of the group to self-organization, teaches children to be vertical in the team, etc. In cases when there is no informal leader in the group (a child with a seen communicative giftedness), the teacher must observe the children and, during the first 15 days of their stay in kindergarten, identify children with potential leadership qualities and signs of communicative talent. This type of activity is very important for the education system in the PRC today. Communicatively gifted children, passing from nursery school to elementary one and from elementary school to middle school, receive a special mark in the student’s card and have bonuses for admission to a pioneer or young communist party organizations, become leaders of social movements, and subsequently can make a wonderful career in the spheres of public activity or management (Dai, Steenbergen-Hu & Yang, 2016).

There is one more thing that should be mentioned while analyzing the problem of the communicative giftedness of children. The main peculiarity of sensual types of giftedness (which includes communicative) is that it does not imply the process of selecting children for special classes or developing and improving their giftedness in artificially created additional educational institutions (which include children’s clubs, individual and group lessons, etc.). The usual mechanisms traditionally used with other types of giftedness (individual work, specialized clubs, and courses mainly in non-formal education) do not work with communicatively gifted children, since they need an audience and the realization of their leadership ambitions for development (Zhao, 1996).

The Coronavirus pandemic turned up to be a real challenge for without the exception every well-established social scheme and model for organizing life and human activities. On the one hand, protracted quarantine and self-isolation as a social phenomenon showed the vulnerability of existing medicine, economics, public administration, and education as existing systems. However, on the other hand, the need to continue life and work, even in such conditions, led to a sharp



appearance or activation of forms that before Corona was only under development. Currently, there are many programs of artificial intelligence (AI) that help in education, thanks to which students, schoolchildren, and teachers get huge benefits. The use of artificial intelligence capabilities in teaching humanitarian disciplines or humanities is today the subject of discussion among methodologists. Today in the pedagogical space there are many programs and methods of teaching various disciplines for students of different ages who use the capabilities of artificial intelligence. However, these programs mainly exist in the field of non-formal education or for individual use to increase the level of knowledge.

However, if online learning and educating techniques are very effective for the development (self-development, improvement) of abilities and those types of giftedness that are associated with knowledge (mathematics, physics, technology, languages, etc.), sufficiently applicable and justified for creative types of giftedness (literary, artistic, musical, etc.), as “sensory” giftedness (empathic, communicative) computer platforms and programs are useless. This fact can be explained as the developers of today’s IT products deliberately do not take into account (or technically cannot satisfy) the communicative component, which gives live communication and education in a classroom. The following factors are not taken into account:

- 1) the child’s need for communication;
- 2) the child’s need to form and organize the circle and rules of communication according to his understanding;
- 3) the need for leadership and demonstration of their communication skills with the support of adults;
- 4) a communicatively gifted child needs “time to think” before giving out a result, an answer, etc.;
- 5) the child gets very upset if the process that he builds on his own, and its predicted result differs from the “ideal” (which is proposed by the program) (Zhang, 2017; Liu & Barnhart, 1996).

However, defining communicative giftedness as a social and educational value, the Chinese education system, even in the conditions of complete online education, managed to maintain an attitude towards the preservation and development of communication skills in children and youth. To resolve this problem in the PR China online education process the following ways were used:

1. A complex of educational IT products that involve the creation of groups of students, self-structuring of such groups, their communication in the virtual



space to complete homework, and other educational tasks. Such activities being mandatory allow to satisfy the need of communicatively gifted children in organizing their own and the group's communication, the need for leadership, in the distribution of roles in the group, etc. Also, this type of activity contributes to the development of linguistic and managerial abilities of communicatively gifted children (Delisle, 1992). Also as certain "know-how" can be considered the grading system in such tasks: the grade is not given to the group as a whole, but a certain number of points should be distributed among all members of the group, depending on the quantity and quality of the work made by the particular member of the group to complete the homework. In upper classes of secondary school and high school programs, the authority to allocate points among the group members belongs to the group leader with the obligatory explanation of his/her point of view. Since all assessment sheets in such programs are usually free to be seen and imply access to them by both the teacher and the rest of the group, this type of activity is quite correlated with such features of communicatively gifted children as responsibility (hyper responsibility) and leadership as well as neutralizes the factor of personal the relationship of the group leader when assessing, fosters in the child a sense of justice and responsibility for their actions.

2. It is generally accepted (Prather, 2018) that the family is the main factor in the development of communicative giftedness at an early age. A favorable atmosphere in the family, trusting relationships with parents and other family members affect the formation of a child's social interest. Communicative giftedness is formed in children in families with a democratic style of adult communication with each other and with children, where personal communication and joint pastime are valued. Children are given the opportunity for independent actions and decisions, but there is also a certain reasonable control over their actions. Several tasks that are offered today to Chinese children and schoolchildren (especially in primary school) are aimed at the joint work of parents and children. Many tasks begin with the words: "Ask your parents...", "Find out from older family members...", "Do it with your parents...". A popular type of home task is intra-family polls and questionnaires on some specific questions. The child must not only independently create a questionnaire, but also choose the right place, time, form of communication to interview parents and other family members (aunts, uncles, older relatives). The Chinese are usually very responsible for the education of children and the tasks given by teachers are seen as an unjustified axiom. Therefore, many relatives usually take part in making these types of school-home tasks (using social networks, WeChat

significantly facilitates the process of home task making). These types of tasks teach and activate children's ability to communicate with different age groups, build relationships with them, organize their own time for communication and take into account the situation of other people and their desire/unwillingness to communicate on a certain topic "here and now". All these actions meet the needs of communicatively gifted children.

3. With the beginning of massive compulsory online education, schools in PR China received unprecedented financial and technical assistance from the country. This money and opportunities were aimed and spent not only at improving the material and the technical situation in educational institutions of the country, but, to a greater extent, at providing the educational process itself. To preserve (or preserve as much as possible) all the functions of the educational process, including the communicative one, at the state level support services for the educational process were created. To make it functional and working, there were involved a large number of technical personnel (computer professionals) and young teachers (who study at the latter course of pedagogical higher and professional educational institutions and those who are undergoing a teaching internship). On average, today, besides the teacher him/herself, 4–6 people take part in the lesson. The work of the technical support specialists, who accompany a lesson, consists in the selection of technical means and technical support of the lesson itself (including such an element as group-working). The task of the junior pedagogical staff (teacher assistants) is "to ensure and stimulate the process of communication between all participants of the educational process, taking into account their individual and personal characteristics". In other words, thanks to high-quality technical support and the involvement of a large number of people in the educational process, in PR China the educational process was mechanically transferred to the online space with the maximum preservation of all functions of the offline educational one.

It can be said that today the PR China uses the most advanced methods of working with communicatively gifted children, as it sees in them the potential that meets the social order of the Chinese society and the Party for socially active, attractive people who know how to lead, manage and lead the nation.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Today everything that goes on in China is of particular interest for the rest of the world not only because the country in a short period (about just a century) has made a great breakthrough in all spheres of life (science and technology,

economics, culture and sports, education, and so on), but also because the country presents to the world non-trivial ways of solving problems (including the educational ones), which are invariably distinguished by high efficiency and healthy pragmatism. China is a country that has rapidly approached the socio-economic level of the world's leading nations. This phenomenon can be explained by the high level of specialists' training in all spheres of public life as well as by rational use of human potential. That is why the question of a detailed study of the Chinese system of work with gifted children, in particular with communicatively gifted ones, to stimulate the development of children's talents in the Chinese state is quite relevant. Communicatively gifted children, as it was repeatedly noted in the article, are seen as a personnel reserve of the party and public organizations, social movements in the country. The planned and natural development of communicative giftedness is part of the modern education system's tasks in China. The transition of the education system to the online format set the task for the Chinese teachers to preserve all the functions and tasks of the education system (including the identification and development of communicative giftedness in children). In this regard, appeared a complex of methods that correspond to the current technical, material, and pedagogical capabilities of the country at present and the product of its implementation meets the social and state demand for the education system as much as possible.

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